

## Message Text

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70

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05

NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 IO-13 /069 W

----- 129965

O 232159Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1715

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 3389

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PBOR, OAS, ES, HO

SUBJECT: EMBASSY ESTIMATE OF POTENTIAL FOR FURTHER DETERIORATION  
OF BORDER SITUATION

REF: (A) STATE 182723

(B) MANAGUA 3477

(C) DAO EL SALVADOR MESSAGE DTG 232040Z JUL 76

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1. WHILE IT IS OBVIOUSLY NOT POSSIBLE TO DISCOUNT A FURTHER  
DETERIORATION OF THE RELATIVELY TENSE SITUATION AT THE BORDER,  
A TENSION WHICH BEGAN TO BUILD EARLIER IN THE MONTH, OR AN  
ESCALATION OF THE LOCAL SKIRMISH PATTERN TO A BROADER SCALE OF  
FIGHTING, NOTHING REPEAT NOTHING IN THE EMBASSY'S CONVERSATIONS  
WITH GOES CONTACTS OR OUR PERCEPTION OF THE SITUATION WOULD LEAD  
US TO EXPECT SUCH A TURN FOR THE WORSE. FOR THE MOMENT, THE  
IMMEDIATE "CRISIS" HAS PASSED AND THINGS SHOULD BEGIN MOVING  
IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION, I.E., TOWARDS A RETURN TO THE NORMAL  
ABNORMAL SITUATION. OUR ASSESSMENT IS NECESSARILY BASED ON  
WHAT WE SEE AND HEAR LOCALLY AND WE SENSE NO WAR FEVER OR  
AGRESSIVE INTENT. OBVIOUSLY, IF THE GOES WERE TO BE CONVINCED  
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BY FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS THAT THE GOH WAS DETERMINED TO OCCUPY

DISPUTED TERRAIN, IT WOULD MOST CERTAINLY RESIST TO THE UTMOST.

2. REF (C) DESCRIBES THE FAVORABLE IMPRESSION AND CEASE FIRE AGREEMENT THE SALVADORAN CHIEF-OF-STAFF BELIEVES WERE THE RESULTS OF YESTERDAY'S MEETING AT EL AMATILLO WITH HIS HONDURAN COUNTER PART. IN ADDITION, WE WOULD CITE THE FOLLOWING EVIDENCE:

(A) THE SALVADORAN MILITARY, WHILE IT HAS INCREASED ITS TROOP STRENGTH NEAR THE BORDER AND ITS OVERALL READINESS, IS NOT IN A STATE OF GENERAL ALERT. THE DEFENSIVE STEPS TAKEN SO FAR ARE ABOUT THE MINIMUM THAT COULD BE EXPECTED. RESERVES HAVE NOT BEEN ASKED TO STAND BY, MUCH LESS CALLED UP. THERE IS SIMPLY NO EVIDENCE THAT THE ARMED FORCE IS PREPARING ITSELF FOR ANYTHING IN THE NATURE OF SERIOUS MILITARY VENTURES.

(B) THE PRESIDENT AND REST OF GOVERNMENT ARE CONDUCTING BUSINESS AS USUAL, AS IS EVERY OTHER SEGMENT OF THE POPULACE. THE PRESIDENT HAS SPENT A GREAT PART OF HIS TIME OF THIS PAST WEEK, INCLUDING A SESSION SCHEDULED FOR THIS AFTERNOON, IN LENGTHY EXPLANATIONS OF HIS FIRST AGRARIAN TRANSFORMATION PROJECT, TO AUDIENCES DRAWN FROM THE VARIOUS SECTORS. THAT SUBJECT IS THE NUMBER ONE TOPIC OF CONVERSATION IN MOST OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE SECTOR CONTACTS, INCLUDING THE MILITARY. THE BORDER SITUATION IS DECIDEDLY SECONDARY. THE NORMALCY IS ALSO REFLECTED IN THE OTHER MAJOR CONVERSATION TOPIC, PLANS FOR THE UPCOMING FIRST-WEEK-OF-AUGUST HOLIDAYS, FIESTAS PATRIAS.

(C) NEWSPAPER AND OTHER MEDIA TREATMENT HAS BEEN STRAIGHT WIRESERVICE COVERAGE FROM HERE AND ABROAD, INCLUDING TEGUCIGALPA. THERE HAS BEEN NO SLANTING, NO SENSATIONALISM, NO JINGOISM. EDITORIAL COMMENT HAS BEEN SCARCE. THE STORY HAS NOT BEEN THE BANNER HEADLINER IN MOST PAPERS, MOST DAYS. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS TRIED TO INFLUENCE MEDIA COVERAGE OR OTHERWISE MANIPULATE THE ISSUE. FROM THE SUBDUE METHOD BY WHICH THE LOCAL PRESS HAS COVERED THE STORY, ONE ALMOST GETS THE IMPRESSION THE GOVERNMENT MIGHT BE TRYING TO DOWNPLAY ITS IMPORTANCE.

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## Message Attributes

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